

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

07-291

Orleans

N

EAS.357,
358

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Campground Road Area

Photograph



Address: 20 Russell Avenue

Historic Name: Harry P. Townsend House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1925

Source: Deed research, Eastham Tax Commitment Books

Style/Form: Craftsman/ Bungalow

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage with hip roof

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None

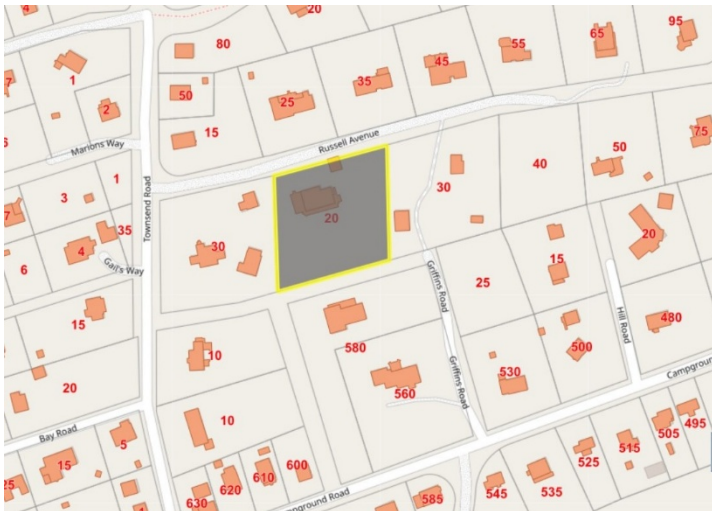
Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 1.0 acres

Setting: This property is located on the south side of a short, dirt-track lane. The surrounding area includes early-20th century cottage lots, and the area is now built out with modest cottages and houses from the early-20th to the early-21st centuries on varying-sized lots. This house is partially obscured from the road by mature evergreen trees and shrubbery. A gravel driveway leads between a garage and the east side of the house.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

This house is very similar in design to the house next store at 30 Townsend Avenue (EAS.361), and both were built by the same person between 1923 and 1925. This is an example of a Craftsman Bungalow. The house has a 1½-story form with hip roof, a centered “doghouse” dormer on the front roof slope, and a broad porch contained within the front roof slope, all characteristic of bungalows. The house rests on a concrete block foundation. The elevations are clad in weathered wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles with modestly projecting open eaves capped with fascia boards. The windows have all been replaced, mostly with modern thermal 1/1 windows, and the two windows in the front dormer have modern thermal windows with a 2/1 muntin pattern. In addition to the bungalow block, there is a large rear (east) addition with a 1½-story, gable-roofed form, which rests on a concrete block foundation and has a tall concrete block chimney. This portion of the house may have begun as a separate cottage that was later added onto the bungalow.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay in Orleans and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

This property is connected to the cottage development around Campground Road - one of the three earliest roads to extend west to Cape Cod Bay from the central sections of Eastham. Despite the early development of the road, which was established to serve the Methodist camp meetings in the mid-19th century, the great majority of houses that border it, especially to the north, are 20th-century vernacular summer cottages and retirement houses.

On the north side of Campground Road, Harry P. Townsend platted a large subdivision in 1929 on two parcels totaling 20 acres he had purchased in 1923 from George Plummer of Lynn, MA (Fig. 2).¹ This acreage had originally been part of the land John Hopkins had owned on the north side of Campground Road. John Hopkins's widow, Diana, had sold the two parcels in 1889 to a Lynn salesman, Henry Marks, who in 1895 sold them to Plummer.² Plummer was a paper box manufacturer (likely for shoes, Lynn's principal industry). None of these deeds, including Townsend's purchase from Plummer in 1923, referenced buildings.

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 390/ Page 545, Plan Book 51/ Page 85.

² Book 185/ Page 130, Book 390/ Page 545.

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By the time Harry Townsend laid out his large subdivision in 1929, he was listed among six Eastham summer residents in the 1929 Cape Cod directory who owned property on Campground Road. Harry Pond Townsend (1875-1942) and his wife Margaret Emma (O'Brien) lived in Hartford, CT. Harry Townsend was an inventor who held 84 patents, and was credited with inventing the New Departure bicycle coaster brake which, according to his obituary, made the bicycle popular. He went on to found the H. P. Townsend Riveting Company which produced riveting, drill and screw machines for the "war industries." After his death, Margaret (1880-1952) ran the company for a time. She was also an active philanthropist who gave the land and funded the construction of the Church of St. Joan of Arc in Orleans. This is the second of two bungalows that Townsend built between 1923 and 1925 – the first, 30 Townsend Avenue (EAS.361), was built for himself and his wife. According to the Area Form for Campground Road (EAS.N), this house had been built by Harry and Margaret Townsend for their daughter, but that is not accurate – they did not have any children.

This house has an Assessor date of 1920, but that is not quite accurate. According to Eastham Tax Commitment Books, Townsend was assessed for one dwelling in the 1924 Tax Books (30 Townsend Avenue), but by the following year was assessed for two dwellings plus a garage. The second house is very likely this house. It is unclear if the garage referenced is the one present on this parcel, or one that Townsend had built for his adjacent house, but both the house and garage are present in this location on the 1938 United States Geological Survey of Cape Cod (Photo 4).

In 1935, the Townsends sold Lot B (this parcel) in the 1929 subdivision, with reference to buildings, to Eugene S. and Anna Zach of Detroit, MI.³ In 1954, the Zachs sold the parcel to John J. and Rita Griffin of Winchester, MA.⁴ That deed included the provision that "no cabins are to be built..." In 1977, the Griffins were living in Harwich when they sold this parcel to Roland R. and Gwendolyn Pelletier of Wellfleet.⁵ In 2012, the Pelletiers were living in North Eastham when they sold it to the current owners, Bradley J. and Ginny S. Kremer of Acton, MA.⁶

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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United States Geological Survey. Aerial Survey 1938-2020,

<https://www.capecodcommission.org/our-work/cape-cod-chronology-viewer/>.

www.ancestry.com - Vital records.

³ Book 516/ Page 287.

⁴ Book 887/ Page 540.

⁵ Book 2598/ Page 136.

⁶ Book 26800/ Page 280.

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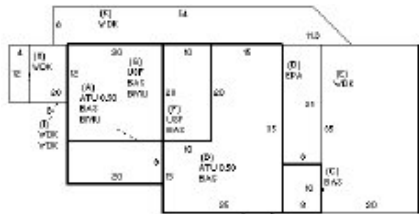


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Russell Avenue, looking southeast.



Photo 3. View of garage, looking southeast.



Photo 4. 1938 USGS aerial survey photo (arrow to 20 Russell Avenue house and garage added).*

*Layover of streets do not align with actual streets in this 1938 photo.

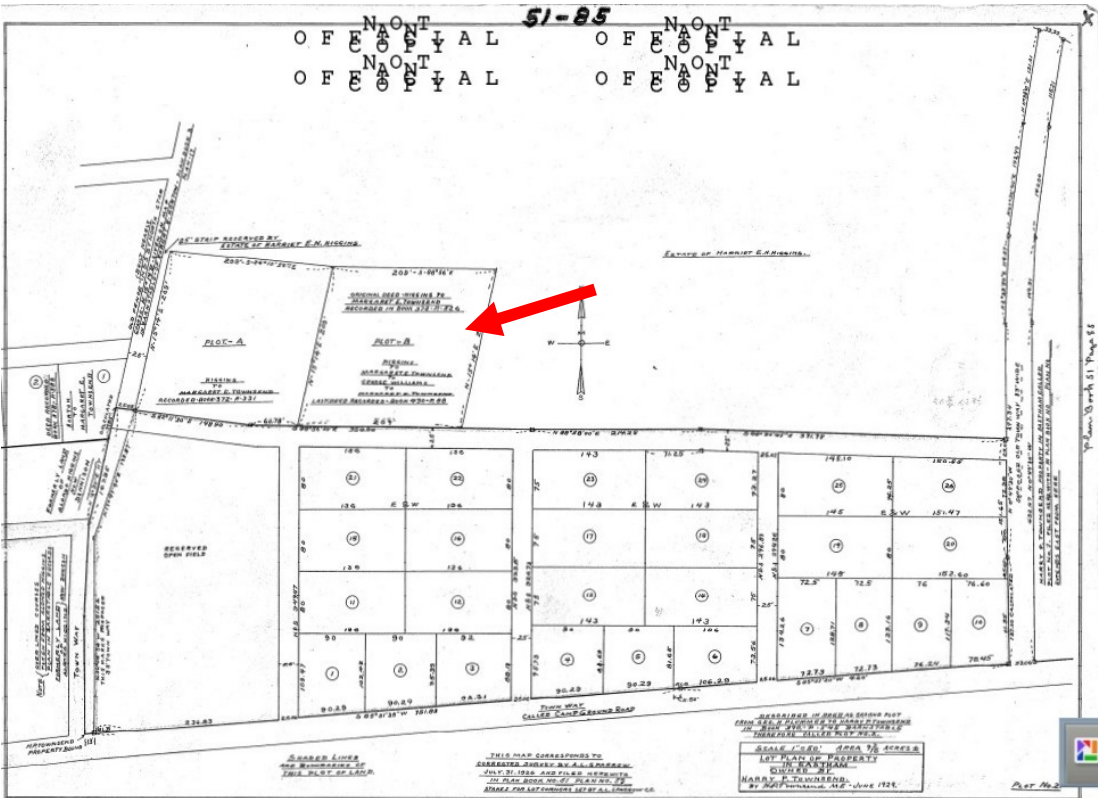


Figure 2. 1929 Harry P. Townsend subdivision (arrow to Lot B added).